

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & FISHERIES
POST OFFICE BOX 98000
BATON ROUGE, LA 70898-9000

Waterfowl Population Estimates
in Louisiana's Coastal Zone Below
U.S. Highway 90 and on Catahoula Lake.

Date: Coastal Zone, January 4-6, 2005,
Catahoula Lake & N.E. Louisiana
January 10-11, 2005
Lake Ponchartrain & Borgne,
January 3, 2005

Reported By: S. Durham, M. Perot,
K. Hemstader, E. LeBlanc

January 13, 2005

Pilot: B. Dorsa, G. Rackle

Estimates made from Aircraft (*) Estimate less than 1,000

SPECIES	SOUTHWEST	SOUTHEAST	CATAHOULA LAKE	TOTALS
MALLARD	108,000	10,000	*	118,000
MOTTLED	21,000	36,000	*	57,000
GADWALL	401,000	537,000	1,000	939,000
WIGEON	39,000	11,000	*	50,000
GW TEAL	446,000	152,000	*	598,000
BW TEAL	26,000	7,000	*	33,000
SHOVELER	121,000	20,000	*	141,000
PINTAIL	150,000	23,000	*	173,000
TOTAL DABLERS	1,312,000	796,000	1,000	2,109,000
SCAUP	18,000	188,000	*	206,000
RINGNECKED	70,000	90,000	33,000	193,000
CANVASBACK	*	*	29,000	29,000
TOTAL DIVERS	88,000	278,000	62,000	428,000
TOTAL DUCKS	1,400,000	1,074,000	63,000	2,537,000
COOTS	104,000	613,000	3,400	720,400

COMMENTS:

The estimate of 2.5 million ducks is 0.8 million higher than last month's estimate, but well below last January's estimate of 3.4 million. It is also below the previous 5-year and long term averages (3.9 and 3.1 million respectively) for January. Mallards, wigeon, and pintails, were well below average. Dabblers were more abundant in southwest Louisiana, while divers were more abundant

in southeast. The low estimate is somewhat difficult to understand after a very strong Arctic cold front drove temperatures well below freezing from Canada south to Louisiana, just prior to and during Christmas. Parts of south Louisiana, even experienced snow and freezing rain. However, one extreme was followed by another as the following weeks have been very mild in Louisiana, with 10 to 14 degrees above normal temperatures and new record highs set in the 80's.

Coastal marshes remained in good condition with average water levels and food availability. Sheet water in the rice prairies remained in good supply.

An additional 150,000 ducks and 116,000 geese were estimated in northeast Louisiana. Above average rainfall during early January and backwater flooding of all river systems, have maintained abundant habitat for waterfowl, similar to last month. This wide dispersal of waterfowl across abundant wetland habitat makes waterfowl counts difficult and so the above estimate likely is low. The water level at Catahoula Lake has been excessively high since late November and was 37 feet at the time of the survey.

In central and northwest Louisiana, USFWS biologists estimated another 13,000 ducks and 7000 geese.

An additional 235,000 scaup were estimated on Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne.

The second split of the duck season closes Jan. 23 in the West Zone and Jan. 30 in the East Zone.